



CAPITOL UPDATE

OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Penny Bernard Schaber

Serving the heart of Appleton



Rep. Bernard Schaber Column, February 10, 2011:

Last month, I began my second term as a member of the Wisconsin State Assembly, returning to Madison to find a Capitol very different from the one I had left. Instead of a Democratic Governor, Assembly, and Senate, all three are now controlled by Republicans. But while the party in power has changed, the needs of the people of Wisconsin have not, and right now, what our state needs are good, family-supporting jobs. Only a month into the session, Gov. Walker and the Republicans are rushing legislation through. While I understand and share their sense of urgency, I am concerned that in the rush to do *something* about the jobs crisis we face, too many proposals are being pushed through the process without transparency or fully developed ideas.

Take, for example, the Small Business Tax Credit bill that recently passed through the legislature. On its face, it sounds like a good idea: if you give tax breaks to small businesses that create jobs, it will encourage businesses to create jobs. When you look at the details, it turns out not to be so simple. There are no standards in the bill for wages and benefits, so the jobs could be minimum wage, temporary jobs without health care, and not the family-supporting jobs we need. There is also no requirement in the bill that the jobs last for any length of time, so a company could hire ten people for two weeks before Christmas and still claim the credit. There is not even a requirement that the job that's created stay in Wisconsin, so a company could create a job here for a week or two, and turn around and send it overseas and still get the tax break. A company in Illinois could even get the credit for sending an employee to work in Wisconsin temporarily. In a time when we need to make every dollar count, we can't afford to pass tax breaks unless we know that they're going to do what we want them to do.

Some of the problems with this bill could have been addressed if Republicans had been willing to accept amendments from Democrats. For example, one amendment I introduced would have required companies to pay back the credit if they ship the jobs they create out of state. Another amendment I offered in committee would have required the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau to run an audit of the tax credit on a yearly basis to make sure the state was spending taxpayer dollars wisely. All the amendments were rejected by Republicans on a party line vote.

I am happy to do bipartisan work. For example the legislature finally passed a law to make contributions to Health Savings Accounts tax deductible. I have been working on this since I was elected in 2008. Because my constituents let me know how important this issue was to them, I was glad to cast a vote in favor of this bill.

Job creation is a goal that both parties share; there is no reason we shouldn't be able to work together to find effective policies that bring jobs to Wisconsin. But that can never happen as long as we treat the work of government as a game, where the "Red Team" can only succeed by stopping the "Blue Team" from getting anything accomplished, or vice versa. Because at the end of the day, if Wisconsin's families aren't winning, both parties are losers.

Brief Statement on Budget Repair Bill:

I am disappointed in Governor Walker and the Republican Leadership's handling of this matter. The message from Governor Walker and the Republican Leadership is that they want to work in a bipartisan manner to solve our budget problems. I am willing to do so, but now I'm realizing that these are just sound bites. By springing this on us at the last minute, making the decision to deny my constituents the opportunity to weigh in, and jamming this through under the guise of a budget "repair" bill, the Governor is making it clear that he alone is running the show.

Question of the Month:

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Make sure to send in your response to rep.bernardschaber@legis.wi.gov or to my office at PO Box 8953 Madison, WI 53708. I will make sure to take any input I receive into consideration during my next term.

Penny's 2011-2012 Committee Assignments:

I was appointed ranking Democratic member on the Assembly's Public Health and Public Safety Committee. In addition, I have been asked to serve on the Jobs, the Economy and Small Business and the Transportation committees.

As the ranking Democrat on the Public Health & Safety Committee, I look forward to working with the full committee to find a bipartisan consensus on legislation protecting Wisconsin's citizens. Safety is not a liberal or conservative, a Republican or Democratic issue, we have a lot of common ground to work from. I will continue to work with the Appleton Police Department, the Outagamie County District Attorney's office and other local offices or organizations to gather feedback on ways to enhance the health and safety of the Fox Valley region. This assignment will help me understand and support changes that will benefit our community.

As a member of the Jobs, Economy and Small Business Committee and the Transportation Committee, I am eager to have the opportunity to continue to work on Democrats' top issue of improving the economy and creating jobs.

Listening Sessions:

Monday February 28th

9-10am and 7:30-8:30pm
Appleton Public Library
225 N. Oneida Street, Appleton, WI 54911-4780
<http://www.apl.org/>

Topic:

Success of Penny's E-Waste Bill

<http://www.postcrescent.com/article/20110111/APC0101/101110451/Recycling-electronics-a-boon-for-some>

Events:

Do you have an event you would like Penny to attend in Appleton? If so, please contact her office at 608-266-3070 or email rep.bernardschaber@legis.wi.gov.

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